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TREATISE

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Communion

CIALLY FOR THE LAITY

PH FRASSINETTI

ST. SABINE, GENOA

ublished By

NTINEL PRESS

STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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SHORT TREATISE

on

Confession and Communion

PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR THE LAITY

BY

JOSEPH FRASSINETTI

PRIOR OF ST. SABINE
GENOA

PUBLISHED BY

THE SENTINEL PRESS

185, East 76th Street, New York.

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Confession.

Confession is one of the seven Sacraments.

IT is of faith that confession is one of the seven Sacraments instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a truth proved by the Gospel of St. John, Chapter XX, taught by all the Fathers of the Church, and defined by the Council of Trent. The following is the definition of the Council: " If any one says that in the Catholic Church, Penance, that is, sacramental Confession, is not really and truly a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ to reconcile the Faithful with God whenever they fall into sin after Baptism, let him be excommunicated. ". Sess. 14, ch. 1.

They, then, who affirm that sacramental Con-

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fession was not instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, or that it is not really a Sacrament, ought to be looked upon as heretics and excluded from the true Church of Jesus Christ. Such are, for instance, those that, in our day, declare Confession to be an invention of priests, of popes, or of some one or other of the Councils, that deny that it is a Sacrament, and necessary to obtain the remission of sins committed after Baptism.

Which sins it is necessary to confess.

THE only sins that we are obliged to confess are mortal sins, because they alone deprive the soul of sanctifying grace. It is very praiseworthy to confess venial sins, also, but there is no obligation to do so.

Sanctifying grace.

EVERY Christian ought to know what sanctifying grace is. Sanctifying grace is a divine gift, a lasting quality that God pours into our soul, which renders us friends of God, heirs of heaven, and brethren of Jesus Christ.

We receive this grace at the moment of Baptism, and it remains in us as long as we commit no sin. Mortal sin alone can make us lose it.

This grace is the true life of the soul, inasmuch as the soul that possesses it, is truly living before God ; if she should pass to the other

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world in that state, it would be impossible for her not to obtain eternal life, namely, Paradise. The soul deprived of sanctifying grace, on the contrary, is really dead in the eyes of God; and if called from the world in that state, it would be impossible for her to escape eternal death, namely, eternal damnation. Now, this grace, note it well, is the portion of all souls not in mortal sin; and it is wanting to all souls that are in mortal sin, had they committed only one.

This grace is called sanctifying, because it sanctifies souls; consequently, every soul exempt from mortal sin, is truly holy, even had she committed thousands and thousands of venial sins. It is this grace that sanctifies the just on earth and renders them worthy of eternal glory.

Do we comprehend the price of this treasure? He who possesses it is really the friend of God and His adopted son. He is the brother of Jesus Christ, " the Firstborn among many brethren, " and by all these titles he is by right the heir to eternal beatitude.

Again, do we comprehend the price of this treasure? If Christians understood it, never would they admit into their souls mortal sin, the only robber able to deprive them of that good so precious. It is a great misfortune that this treasure should be so little known among Christians. Ask them the meaning of sanctifying grace, and the majority know not what to answer.

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We must further observe that this grace, like all other treasures, is susceptible of increase. It is an Article of Faith that souls adorned with sanctifying grace merit its increase in proportion to their good works. Every time they make the sign of the cross or invoke the Name of Jesus, they receive an increase of grace ; with how much more reason, then, when they make an act of the love of God, hear Holy Mass, approach the Holy Table, etc. !

Let us judge from what has been said of the treasures that are accumulated in the soul of good Christians habitually exempt from mortal sin. By every one of the thousands of good works which they perform they acquire new degrees of grace, which go on multiplying to infinity. Now, to the degrees of grace acquired in this life correspond the degrees of glory that they shall possess in Paradise.

Examination of conscience.

Let us return to our first proposition. It is an Article of Faith, defined by the First Council of Lateran and the Council of Trent, that the sinner, in order to obtain pardon, must confess all his mortal sins without excepting any. There is question here of mortal sins recalled after a proper examination of conscience. Those that are not recalled after such an examination, are pardoned at the same time as the others.

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If, however, sins thus omitted return to the memory, we must, although they are already pardoned, accuse ourselves of them in our next confession.

We must, then, accuse ourselves of all the mortal sins that we can remember after a proper examination of conscience. Then such an examination of conscience is necessary. This necessity is, however, not absolute, but only relative. In other words, the examination is not required for all, but only for those that by omitting it expose themselves to forget mortal sins.

For Christians who, by the grace of God, never commit mortal sins, evidently there can be no danger of forgetting them in confession. Nor does such danger exist for such as rarely commit them, and who confess them at once, or soon after their fall. Such Christians are, then, even by the rigor of theology, dispensed from examining their conscience, either because they commit no grave faults, or because, if it should happen that they commit one, it would be impossible for them to forget it even without the least examination.

It is very different with those that ordinarily commit a great number of mortal sins, and confess but rarely. By making no examination of conscience, they expose themselves to the actual danger of omitting some such sins ; they are, in consequence, bound to examine their conscience before confession. These are truths that no theologian has ever questioned.

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Our intention is not to induce the timid to neglect examination of conscience. We merely wish to enlighten them upon their real obligation, and to calm the exaggerated fears of many. It is a fact attested by experience, that they who have no need of examining themselves, are precisely they who give themselves most trouble on this point. The anxiety with which they apply themselves thereto greatly retards their spiritual advancement.

We, therefore, exhort all Christians, even the most timorous, always to make their examination of conscience before confession, for it is a thing eminently proper. If for many such an examination is not necessary, yet it will be of great advantage to them. It will help them better to confess their light faults and to correct them. They should, however, be very careful not to become disquieted on the subject. The examination of conscience ought to be a subject of disquietude to no one, not even, as we shall presently explain, to the greatest sinners; surely, then, not to souls who habitually live in the holy fear of God.

The examination ought to turn upon what constitutes the obligatory matter of confession, namely, upon the species of sins, their number, and the circumstances that change their species. There is no necessity to exmine one's self upon circumstances that only increase the malice of the sin, since there is no obligation of accusing

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one's self of it. * Let us take, for example, the child that gives his father a blow. It would not suffice for him to say : *I struck my neighbor.* He must say : *I struck my father,* because such an injury to a father offends not only against the virtue of charity, but also against the other virtue of filial piety. The circumstance of the person struck changes, then, the species of the sin, and it ought to be mentioned in the accusation.

But if, instead of one blow, that wicked son had, in the same outburst of rage, given his father two or three blows, he would not be obliged to indicate the number of blows given. It would suffice for him to say : *I struck my father,* because the fact of having given one or two blows more in the same fit of passion, constitutes a circumstance which, indeed, aggravates the sin, but which does not change the species.

Examination of conscience made by the devout.

WE now address you in particular, pious souls, who frequently approach the tribunal of penance. Some instructions on the subject of the examination preparatory for confession, may be of great use to you. How many of you, every time you go to confession, are beyond measure

* But as the laity are not versed in the technicalities of moral theology, it is, therefore, advisable, when the circumstance of a sin seems grave, to declare this circumstance in confession, for it may not only aggravate the sin, but change its species.

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preoccupied with that examination! You devote to it, or rather you lose considerable time in it, fearing not to be able to recall all your sins, fearing to forget some fault and, on that account, to make a bad confession.

By what has already been said, you understand that, by confessing without previous examination, you confessed well, provided you were not obliged to examine yourself. The reason that frees you from such obligation is, that there is in your case no danger of forgetting a mortal sin, since you do not commit such sins. If it should happen to you (which may God forbid) to commit one, that fall would make such an impression on your soul that you would not be able to forget it even should you try to do so.

Moreover, three things are necessary, as you know, to constitute a mortal sin: first, grave matter; secondly, full understanding; and thirdly, the deliberate consent of the will. Now, when you have committed an act or yielded to a thought grievously culpable, having perfectly remarked the gravity of the sin that you are going to commit and having resolved upon it with full and entire will, how could it happen that, confessing some days later, you could forget the sin committed? Why, more easily would you forget the way that leads to your own home!

You abhor not only mortal sin, but also venial sin fully consented to, and that to such a degree that you never, or almost never, commit

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such sins. Under such conditions, if you have the misfortune to commit one, the impression it will make upon you will certainly prevent your forgetting it when you go to confession.

If you have told an officious falsehood, or been guilty of a slight slander with full deliberation, such faults will remain impressed upon the memory until you have accused yourself of them. After that, can you think that you have forgotten in confession any mortal sin you might have had the misfortune to commit? Come, now, let us be sincere. Say that you yourself do not believe such forgetfulness possible. You must, then, be persuaded that you are not bound to examine yourself before confession. By accusing yourself of the faults that come of themselves to mind, you will, without any examination, make an excellent confession.

Would that you attentively reflected on these words, because, in truth, it is deplorable to find among souls so many who, examining their conscience every time they confess, even every eight days, are troubled and disquieted at not finding sins of which to accuse themselves. What wonder, we may say to them, if, not wishing to commit sins, you do not commit them! The wonder would be for you to commit sin when you do not wish to do so. On the contrary, what more simple, and shall we dare say it, what more natural than, wishing not to commit sin, you do not commit it? What! Could any one sin with the express will not to do so?

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It is impossible for a Christian to sin as long as he does not will it. This is an Article of Faith. Are you surprised to see accomplished in yourself what Faith teaches? Are you at all surprised when you hear it said that the wicked rich man, dying in the state of mortal sin, was buried in hell? No, you answer, for Faith teaches that the sinner dying in his sin, goes to hell. And yet you are surprised at this statement that you commit no fault, neither mortal nor venial, with full deliberation if you do not want to commit it. Does not Faith teach us that without the will, no sin is possible? If, then, you find no fault of which to accuse yourself, do not be troubled on that account, but thank the good God who, by His grace, has strengthened your will in order to prevent you from yielding to temptation.

You will, perhaps, ask: Is it possible that one can have no fault whatever with which to reproach one's self? The saints committed some, and do not we commit some, too? Yes, we may fear, and with reason, it seems to us, for how many faults our blindness prevents us, perhaps, from recognizing!

By the foregoing remarks, you mean, doubtless, that having no knowledge of the sins into which you think you fall, you are bound to hunt them up and, for this end, examine your conscience anxiously in the hope of discovering them.

We answer: Above all, recall what we have

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already said, namely, that mortal sins alone are the obligatory matter for sacramental Confession, and that, consequently, there is obligation to examine one's self only upon mortal sin.

Coming now to venial sins, to which we alluded in saying that the saints themselves are not exempt from them, we shall show you that the faults committed by the saints were not sins of full deliberation. They were faults proceeding less from malice of the will than from human frailty. They were such sins as no one escapes without a special privilege from God, such privilege, we know, having been accorded to no saint, the Blessed Virgin Mary excepted. * They were sins committed rather through surprise than from a perverse will. Now, it is certain that you constantly commit such sins, unless you, too, have received the privilege granted to the Blessed Virgin. Such sins are more known of very enlightened persons such as were the saints than of the less favored by divine light, in which latter number you, perhaps, ought to be classed. In either case, however, they are not faults upon which it is necessary either to examine one's self or to confess.

On the other hand, not having so many lights as the saints had, you cannot pretend to know such faults as they knew them ; consequently, thou ought to be satisfied with examining yourself upon sins committed with full knowledge and

* Council of Trent. Session 6, ch. II.

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which, on that account, are soon perceived by him who is examining his conscience. And if, we repeat, you commit no sins of this kind, it is evident that you will not be able to find them when making your examination. Calm yourself, then, and do not obstinately insist upon finding sin where there is none. Consecrate some moments to this examination of which, theologically speaking, you have no need, and cease to disquiet yourself, to trouble yourself as you do to the great detriment of your soul.

We say *theologically speaking*, because according to the principles and teachings of theology, you have no need of examination.

Let us here observe that the principles and teachings of theology ought to serve as a guide and rule in all things regarding Christian piety. On this point, we may here express our regret that certain books of devotion have been written by men either little familiar with theology or who, though sufficiently familiar with it, have not taken it into account in their writings. We are here referring to those books that fill the mind of pious persons with false ideas, that are tainted with rigorism, and are calculated to excite fear and doubt. Thus it happens that such souls walk painfully in the path of piety, always hesitating, always disquieted and disconcerted, and consequently, deprived of that peace which the Apostle desired to see reigning in all hearts.

It is for this reason, without wishing to prohibit in any way examination of conscience before

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confession, on the contrary, rather advising it in view of the advantages that it may procure to those even that have no need of it, we exhort you to make such examination very briefly, without fearing by that to fail in your duty.

Examination of conscience for sinners.

ALL who by omitting the examination of conscience expose themselves to forget mortal sins, make bad confessions if they neglect such examination. Consequently, the examination becomes necessary for those that confess rarely, and even for those that, although confessing often, live in the habit of mortal sin. By omitting it, such sinners evidently run the risk of forgetting grievous sins.

Besides, the more rare their confessions and the more frequent and multiplied their falls, the more diligent should be their examination, and to it they should devote a proper and sufficient time.

On the other hand, such sinners ought not on account of it torment themselves, become disconcerted, and lose their peace of soul. According to all theologians, this examination ought always to be proportioned to the capacity of the penitent. It ought to be *human*, as the celebrated De Lugo expresses it.

Penitents in general are not theologians ; consequently, they are not obliged, they are even incapable of examining themselves according to all

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the rules and distinctions of theology. It suffices for every one to examine himself as he can. He who is more intelligent and better instructed, is bound to more ; but he who is less, is bound to less. God is satisfied as long as every one does good according to his capacity.

And let no one object that many sinners are ignorant, because they will to be so, inasmuch as they have neglected the reading of pious books, or have failed to assist at religious instructions. When, in effect, the sinner returns to God and, in order to be reconciled with Him, disposes himself to make a good confession, he cannot instantaneously change the state in which he then is. If he is an ignorant man, he cannot metamorphose himself into a learned one. He has sinned in not instructing himself as he should have done, and if such negligence has been gravely culpable, he ought to confess it. For the present, however, the good God Himself must take him as He finds him, that is to say, ignorant, unless He infuses into his mind the knowledge in which he is wanting.

Shall we assert that the sinner ought to delay his confession until he is well instructed? No theologian has ever laid down so strange a requirement. Let the sinner confess as well as he can, and for that let him make what examination of conscience he can. God is satisfied for the time being, and the sinner is restored to grace. He will later on fulfil whatever obligation may rest upon him to instruct himself

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better in the truths of Faith and Christian morality. (It is evidently supposed that such a sinner is not without some knowledge of the principal mysteries of Faith. If ignorant of them, he ought to be instructed before receiving absolution.)

In short, if the examination of conscience, however imperfect it may be in itself, is proportioned to the capacity of the penitent, the confession cannot fail to be good and to restore the sinner to the state of grace. There is, then, no cause for such a penitent to torment himself on the subject.

The examination ought, besides, to be *human*, that is to say, it ought not to be rendered too painful. Consequently, theologians say, the penitent is not obliged to employ in it all possible diligence, but only that discreet care which prudent men bring to affairs of some importance.

Let us note one difference, and that is, in affairs of material interest, there are books containing statements of the sums and giving an account of the smallest differences; whereas, for conscience affairs, the registers are wanting. The only means of calculating them is the memory, in many persons very short-lived, and in all weak and inefficient. Now, to wish to force the memory to recall exactly things and, above all, actions and thoughts which date far back, is to impose upon one's self a painful, and very often, a very fruitless, task.

If we were obliged to bring to the examination

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all possible care and to constrain the memory to recall things with rigorous exactitude, it would be an obligation hard, painful, and insupportable. The Sacrament of Penance would thereby become the executioner of souls, as Protestants call it. Christians would remain far from it, abhorring this means of salvation which Jesus Christ has made necessary for all who have fallen into mortal sin after Baptism.

For this reason, the greatest sinners, even those that have grown old in vice, ought to take care, when they return to God, not to trouble and torment themselves on account of examination of conscience. It suffices that they quietly review the years of their sinful life, remarking as well as they can their bad habits and the probable frequency of their sins, monthly, weekly, or daily, without aiming at precision or certitude utterly impossible. After having made their examination in this way, they ought to remain tranquil, not thinking themselves obliged to examine more and more under pretext that, by doing so longer, they would find new sins of which to accuse themselves in confession. Cardinal De Lugo expressly teaches this when speaking of the discretion that the confessor ought to observe in the questions that he puts to his penitent. " It is bad reasoning, " says that theologian, " to say : Such and such questions make me discover more clearly the number or the species of sins committed. Then, we must ask : How could it be bad reasoning on the

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penitent's part to say : If I examine myself another hour, I may discover the sins that now escape my notice, and then I shall very likely make a more exact accusation ? If this be so, I ought to examine myself another hour." Under such conditions, there would never be an end to these examinations.

Let us now see how sinners ought to act who have not confessed for a long time, or who have made a great number of null or sacrilegious confessions.

They ought to fix the date since their last confession, or since their last good confession, for example, say ten years. Then they should examine the species of sins into which they have fallen, whether theft, unjust contracts, blasphemy, hatred, impurity, failing to hear Mass, etc.

The species of their sins being known, they must next consider their number. If there is not question of habitual sins, but of those committed at rare intervals, we can easily calculate the precise or, at least, the approximate, number. This happens, for instance, when the penitent has, in the space of ten years, failed to hear only five or six Masses of obligation, so that naturally he ought to accuse himself of that number. If, on the contrary, there is question of sins of habit, — if, for example, the penitent has blasphemed every time that he got angry ; if he defrauded his customers whenever he could ; if every day, or almost every day, he committed sins of impurity, above all, in thought, it would

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be utterly impossible for him to decide even upon the approximate number of his sins. It would be necessary for him to understand arithmetic, and, pen in hand, make numberless calculations, which, however, would give only very doubtful results, especially in what regards sins of thought, which, in persons living without the fear of God, sometimes count a hundred or so in the day.

What, then, ought the penitent to do in the case of bad habits continued for a long time, nay, even for long years? He ought to examine, as well as he can, the frequency of his falls into such sins, whether it has been several times a month, a week, or even a day. This is very easily done, provided he recalls with certainty, at least in a confused manner, the greater or less frequency of those sinful acts.

If a penitent was troubled at not being able to make this examination, simple though it be, it would suffice for him to declare the evil habit, and answer the confessor's questions on that point.

We meet some persons who are absolutely incapable of making such calculations. They are unable to recall anything. They can say to the confessor only : *I have always blasphemed. I always wished evil to my neighbor. I have always committed such and such a sin.*

Ought such persons to confess? Yes. Let them confess as well as they can. If the con-

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fessor desires to have a more distinct knowledge of things, he can gain it by questioning.

Do not think us too easy with regard to sinners who have lived in the habit of sin, in satisfying ourselves with so general an examination. We can cite illustrious theologians more indulgent than we in this respect, such as Melchior Canus, Pierre Soto, Navarrus, Cajetan, Billuart, and Cardinal Gousset. Speaking of persons who for long years have exercised some criminal profession, or who have lived in the occasion of sin, these theologians teach that an accusation like the following would suffice for them : *For ten years, for five years, I have led such a life. You understand me clearly enough, Father, so I need say no more about it to you.* *

The reason for such indulgence is this, the habit and the time of its continuance being once known, the confessor can judge of the species and the number of sins arising from it, as well as he could from a long and detailed accusation.

The important thing is, that no one omit, or even defer, his confession, on account of the difficulty of examination of conscience. Let him do what he can ; the confessor will do the rest. The chief point is, that the sinner, as soon as he hears the call of God, hearkens to it without delay, and casts himself at once at the feet of a good confessor, who will aid him according to the lights that God will give him, to rise from the deplorable state in which he is.

* De Lugo cit. sect. 15 ; Gousset, Vol. II, n. 417.

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There is still a word to say on the *method* of examination, namely, whether it is necessary to examine one's self on the Ten Commandments of God, and the Precepts of the Church, or upon thoughts, words, actions, or omissions in their regard. I shall briefly observe that the first method is suited to great sinners who acknowledge themselves guilty of all sorts of sins. Let them examine themselves seriously upon all the Commandments, since they have sinned against all or almost all, and they will without trouble discover the various kinds of sin they have committed. They will in this way run no danger of forgetting any.

For the devout who confess frequently, it would be superfluous for them to wish to examine themselves on all the Commandments. Why should they ask themselves whether they have blasphemed, sworn falsely, stolen, failed to hear Masses of obligation, omitted their Paschal Communion? They know very well that they have never committed such sins ; and, therefore, we say that such an examination would be for them something superfluous. *

* In the sense in which Frassinetti is here speaking, such a method would, indeed, be superfluous, though it might, perhaps, be very reasonably employed. Naturally pious persons would examine themselves not on the mortal sins against the Commandments, since such persons are supposed not to commit grave faults. But nothing can prevent them from examining themselves on the Commandments, in order to discover the venial faults that may have escaped them on these heads ; for example, voluntary distractions in prayer and at Holy Mass, which faults fall under the First and the Third Commandments ; disobedience and want of respect

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Speaking in general, also, the second method is preferable, namely, that which consists in examining thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, and noting the faults of which one has rendered himself guilty in those four ways of offending God.

They who confess frequently, however, need not put themselves to the trouble of following any method. If they have committed sins with full deliberation, they will not fail to recall them perfectly. If there is question of simple venial sins, there is no obligation to examine one's self, as we have repeatedly declared, and still more easily will mortal sin be recalled if they should happen to fall into it.

Contrition.

WHENEVER we go to confession, we ought carefully to excite ourselves to repentance for our sins, that is, for *mortal* sins, note that well. God cannot pardon some sins without pardoning others. Mortal sins are pardoned by means of the infusion of sanctifying grace. Now this infusion is impossible if there remains in the

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to parents, under the Fourth ; detraction in small matters, under the Fifth and the Eighth. etc.

In such an examination, they should, indeed, pass over the Commandments against which they know for sure that they have not sinned.

In fact, it is in this way that many pious persons make their examination, and we see no real motive for them to give up such a method, which has been followed by them from childhood. It is even preferable to the second, which, as it seems, is rather vague. There are, moreover, so many ways of sinning by action, that it

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soul one sin of which it has not repented, and for which it preserves an attachment; consequently, no sin is forgiven if all are not pardoned.

Venial sins, on the contrary, may be remitted one without the other; for instance, slight falsehoods may be pardoned while sins of impatience are not, if we repent of the first and not of the second. If we accuse ourselves of mortal sins in confession, we must repent of all such sins without exception. If, on the contrary, we have only venial sins to confess, we must repent of, at least, one of these sins.

Now, let us understand this well. There is no obligation to confess venial sins; nevertheless, if we approach the tribunal of Penance with only venial sins, it is positively necessary to repent of at least one of these sins, in order that there may be matter for absolution. If we act otherwise, that is to say, if confessing only venial sins, we have contrition for none of them, the absolution produces no effect, and the Sacrament is null. If we should knowingly make such a confession, it would with regard to the Sacrament be even an irreverence and a profanation.

We repeat, then: Every time that we go to

would even be necessary to establish a certain order among them. Why not, then, the order of the Commandments!

Some persons use the following order: Sins against God, against the neighbor, against self, against the duties of one's state. We see no reason for changing such a method.

This remark is meant for those that follow a method, though none is necessary for those that confess often and live habitually in the state of grace.

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confession, we must repent of the sins of which we accuse ourselves, of *all* if they are mortal sins, and of at least *one* if they are venial sins.

Let us here make an observation very important for persons who often approach the Sacrament, and who only have light faults of which to accuse themselves. It may easily happen that for these faults they have not the sorrow necessary in order to receive absolution with fruit, and that thus they receive it badly. To prevent this disorder, theologians teach that, in such cases, these persons ought to confess one or more sins of their past life, for which they are truly sorry. They ought to confess as follows : After telling the slight faults committed since their last confession, they should add : *" I accuse myself, also, of the sins of my past life, and especially of the sins that I have committed against charity, or against patience, or against holy purity, "* etc.

These sins having already been confessed, there is no need to indicate the number and circumstances which change their species. It suffices to say : " I accuse myself of the sins that I have committed against such or such a virtue. "

It is needless to say that, when we repeat the confession of such faults, in order to make matter for our confession, we ought to repent of them afresh, as if we were accusing ourselves of them for the first time. In effect, the accusation of such sins made without contrition, would be

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an accusation wanting in the second condition, necessary for every good confession, namely, contrition.

Some will, perhaps, say : But sins once confessed, ought not to be confessed again. And yet you would have us accuse ourselves of them hundreds and thousands of times, that is, every time we go to confession.

It is very true, we reply, that sins well confessed, ought no longer to exist, nor do I say that you are obliged to confess them a second, and still less a tenth and a hundredth time, as if they had been imperfectly pardoned the first time. If we exhort you to accuse yourself of them anew, without mentioning either their number or their circumstances, it is in order that your confession may not be null for want of sufficient matter, and that you may receive the fruit of the Sacrament.

Furthermore, we advise you to confess sins of your past life in order to excite sincere contrition in your heart, for it is to be feared that if you have only light sins of which to accuse yourself, you may not have for them the real sorrow necessary to receive absolution effectively.

Observe, carefully, that we do not teach this doctrine in order to give you to understand that sins ought to be confessed more than once, which would be a manifest error ; but we put it forth that you may be able to assure yourself of the fruit of the Sacrament of Penance. This fruit

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for Christians exempt from mortal sin, is an increase of sanctifying grace. In effect, Sacramental Confession gives grace to those deprived of it by mortal sin, and it increases that grace in those that, guilty only of venial sin, already possess it.

Many authors do not approve accusations made in the following or similar terms: *I accuse myself of sins of thought, of word, of deed, and of omission committed in the past.* Such an accusation appears to them too general, and is equivalent to this: *I accuse myself of being a sinner*, since whoever sins, offends God either by thought, word, action, or omission. So vague an accusation is, according to them, insufficient. They demand the mention of some special sin, for example, a theft committed in the past, or, at least, as we have said, some sin opposed to a determinate virtue, namely, justice, chastity, or the love of the neighbor. Other authors, however, think differently, as may be seen in Gury's *Theology* with notes by Ballerini. *

How to excite contrition.

We ought to excite ourselves to sorrow for our sins by some motive suggested by faith, that is, on account of the offence offered

* Gury, Vol. II, n. 424. Whatever may be the divergence of opinion, the accusation of sins committed in the past against such or such a determinate virtue, is so easy that we would counsel it to all pious persons who have any doubt as to whether they have ever repented of the light faults of which they accuse themselves. — [*The Translator.*]

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to God infinitely good and worthy to be loved above all things ; or, again, on account of paradise lost and hell deserved; or, lastly, on account of the horror of sin considered in the light of revelation.

If, after our examination, we find ourselves guilty of mortal sin, me must consider the eternal recompense of which it has deprived us, and the horrible chastisement of hell that it has merited for us. In this way we excite ourselves to the sorrow called *attrition*.

We should next cast a glance at the Crucifix, considering that, by mortal sin, we have offended God infinitely good, worthy in Himself of infinite love, and who has shown Himself so full of love for us by becoming man, and by immolating Himself on the cross for our salvation. Thus is excited in our heart the sorrow of *contrition*. Though not necessary to a good confession, this sorrow is much more meritorious and more efficacious. It effaces sin even before absolution.

We ought to excite ourself at least to attrition, even if we have only venial sins of which to accuse ourselves. For this end, we may represent to ourselves the torments or purgatory. The thought of having merited them by venial faults, will suffice to excite in us the repentance requisite to obtain their pardon.

We would do well, also, to consider the deformity of sin, which is always an offence offered to the Divine Majesty, a black ingratitude, after

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so many benefits received, and, in the eyes of God, the only real evil.

Devout souls who commit no mortal sins, ought to be well persuaded that nothing is more easy than to excite themselves to contrition. Living in the grace of God, they have in themselves as an habitual state, the hatred and detestation of sin, and consequently they pass very easily from the habit to the act. Let us by an example illustrate this truth so consoling for them.

Suppose a man wants to draw water from a reservoir, but he finds it empty. What must he do? Why, he must take the trouble to fill it, then open the faucet, and let the water run out. If, on the contrary, the reservoir is already full, it is necessary only to open the faucet for the water to flow out. Now, the heart of a sinner is a heart empty of the hatred and detestation of sin. If he wishes to make an act of contrition, he ought first to force himself to excite in his heart this hatred and detestation. But as for the just man, since his heart is already filled with that hatred, nothing is more easy for him than to make an act of contrition.

The good purpose of amendement.

We shall say very little of the good purpose that necessarily accompanies repentance when it is true. It is impossible to repent sincerely of our sins, whether mortal or venial, with-

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out having the will to commit them no more. Now, the good purpose is nothing else than the will to renounce sin.

This will, if sincere, necessarily comprises the resolution to shun the occasions of sin, and put in practice the counsels given by the confessor to render the amendment lasting.

Of confession.

It is a truth known to all Christians, that they who conceal a single mortal sin in confession, not only do not obtain pardon for the sins that they have confessed, but that they burden their conscience with a sacrilege. It is, then, a less evil to communicate in mortal sin without having confessed, than to do so after a confession in which a grave sin has been concealed. The sinner communicating without having confessed, does so with one sacrilege less than if he were to approach the Holy Table after a bad confession. Even at the moment of death, it is better not to confess at all rather than to confess badly. By confessing not at all, the sinner does, indeed, go to hell, but he goes with one sacrilege less upon his soul; consequently, he will have less to suffer for all eternity. *

He who is ashamed to confess any mortal sin whatever, ought to make an effort to conquer

* We should not, however, under this pretext, neglect to procure for even the most hardened sinner a priest who, by the grace of God, may convert him. — [*The Translator.*]

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himself and confess it, cost what it may. He will easily triumph over his shame if he observes the counsels that we are about to give him. Let him supplicate the Lord to grant him the necessary courage, and for that end, let him beg the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, invoke his angel guardian, and then without more reflection, present himself to his confessor, and begin at once : *"Father, I have something that troubles me."* These words uttered, all is done. The confessor knows very well how to reach that of which there is question, and he will help you as he is in duty bound to do.

Dear Reader, if you are ashamed to confess one or more sins, say these few words and, we repeat, all will come right. The demon who makes use of that shame to tempt you, will retire confounded. You will be restored to God's grace, and you will taste a joy and a peace such as you never before experienced.

We wish to teach you here what St. Alphonsus taught even to religious, namely, that certain sins of immodesty, gravely culpable in themselves, ought not to be mentioned in confession if, at the time of their commission, the penitent knew not their malice. "This applies," says the Holy Doctor," to certain acts of levity, to certain unseemly jesting or sports, to which one may have delivered himself in childhood without suspecting their malice. Even had these things been done in secret, yet it would not be a certain proof of guilt, for there are some natural acts that

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children do in private, but which, however, are not sins. We are not obliged to confess such things in particular, unless we recall having committed them with the consciousness of committing a grave sin or, at least, with the doubt that the sin might be grave. It suffices that we say in our own mind: "Lord, if I knew myself bound to confess these things, I would do so without hesitation, whatever pain it might cost me." *

St. Alphonsus teaches this doctrine to religious, and we do not scruple to teach it to you. St. Alphonsus became a saint in teaching it, and we can certainly save our soul by putting it in practice. St. Alphonsus was not an imprudent or lax theologian.

But, you will say, what advantage can we derive from this teaching?

What advantage? — We answer, the following:

Some souls, naturally timid and fearful, apprehending that certain indecent actions, committed by them in early childhood without consciousness of their malice, are truly sins in themselves, think themselves obliged to accuse themselves of them in confession. But, conquered by shame, they keep silence and, as their erroneous conscience makes them believe themselves obliged to confess them, by not confessing them they continually make sacrilegious confessions and Communions. If they knew that

* *The Nun Sanctified.* Ch. 18, § 1. n. 4.

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there is no obligation for them to confess such acts, they would not scruple to pass them over in silence, and they would not commit a sacrilege. Now, is it a little thing to save these souls so many bad confessions ? Behold, then, the advantage that the teaching of this doctrine procures, and that St. Alphonsus had in view when giving it to religious.

A second advice that we shall give to persons that accuse themselves of sins of this kind is, to confine themselves to what is strictly necessary in order to make known the nature of the sin to the confessor. In certain matters it is necessary to be as brief as possible. All theologians agree upon this point. In Cardinal Gousset, we read :* The most rigorous theologians, they even who exact the accusation of circumstances merely aggravating, make an exception to this rule for what regards sins contrary to holy purity.

When, therefore, they who have had the misfortune to fall into such sins, perceive that the confessor understands at the first word the nature of the sin confessed, they should take care not to add another.

This is a point upon which, if they meet a confessor given through scrupulosity to question too closely into such matters, they should leave him and go to another ; for such a confessor would not be for them a good one.

Doubtless, all sins ought to be confessed ; but

* Vol. I. n. 424,

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such as we are now speaking of should be confessed as briefly as possible, without entering into the details permitted in other matters less delicate.

Sacramental Penance.

As to the sacramental penance, we shall merely exhort you to perform it exactly and at the time prescribed, that is, if the confessor had fixed a time for it. If he fixed no time, perform it at once, that is, on the day upon which it was enjoined, for fear of forgetting it, or of putting it off too long. In case it should have been forgotten or deferred, you ought always to perform it as soon as it occurs to the memory.

If the penance should seem to you too hard, ask your confessor to change it, but do not change it yourself.

N. B. — Since the penance is one of the parts of the Sacrament, it is very important that it should be said as soon as possible after confession and in the manner the confessor directs. If we defer it from day to day, we are apt to omit it altogether. To wilfully omit the penance imposed by the priest is a sin, the gravity of which depends upon the nature of the sins confessed at the time it was given.

Another reason why the penance should be said promptly is that a person exposes himself to the risk of sinning mortally before saying it. When one performs the penance in a state of mortal sin, it is true that one fulfils the obligation imposed by the minister of God, but one does not obtain the end for which the obligation was imposed, viz., a certain remission of the punishment due to sins.

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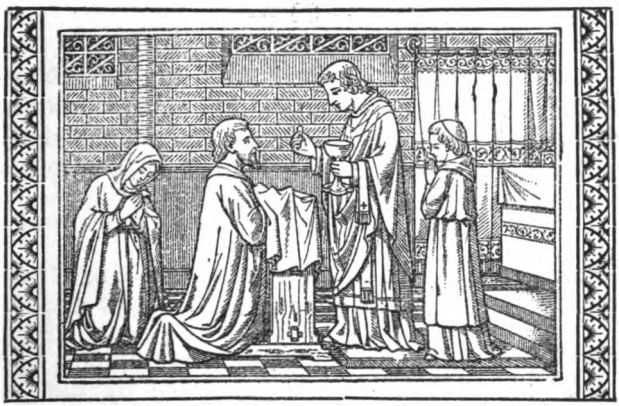

Holy Communion.

This is one of the subjects upon which the Faithful have great need of instruction. It is, above all, most important that they should understand the efficacy of the august Sacrament.

The excellence of Holy Communion.

THE Holy Eucharist increases in us the sanctifying grace of which we have spoken in the article on Confession, and that in larger proportion than all the other Sacraments. The other Sacraments are the channels which flow from the Fountain of all grace, Jesus Christ Himself; but in this Sacrament we receive the Fountain Itself, Our Divine Saviour. As there is no proportion between God and His creatures, also is there none

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between the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments. There is, then, nothing astonishing in this, that It confers in greater abundance sanctifying grace, that grace which renders holy the just of earth and the elect of heaven.

How grace is produced in us by the Most Holy Eucharist.

We must note well that this Sacrament, like all the others, confers grace by the intrinsic efficacy that it owes to Jesus Christ, so that the infusion of grace does not take place by virtue of the good disposition of the communicant, but by virtue of the efficacy that this Sacrament derives from Jesus Christ, its Author. Good dispositions are necessary only to remove the obstacles of the conferring of grace, but it is not these dispositions that confer it.

Let us illustrate by an example. Fire burns wood by virtue of the force that is proper to it. Now, if the wood, in order to ignite, must possess certain conditions, or, if we may so express it, must be in certain dispositions, yet it is not these dispositions that cause the wood to kindle. To do so, the wood must be dry ; and yet it is not by virtue of that dryness that it ignites, but by virtue of the heat that the fire communicates to it. The proof of this is, that the wood, however dry it may be, does not kindle when held at a certain distance from the fire.

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All the Sacraments, it is true, operate or increase grace in this manner; but we repeat, the Eucharist produces this effect in greater proportion.

The disposition necessary and sufficient for Holy Communion.

OBSERVE well that the dispositions requisite for Holy Communion to produce grace, or to increase it, are reduced to one, namely, the state of grace, that is to say, freedom from every mortal sin and, in certain cases, the simple absence of every attachment to mortal sin.

That is the necessary disposition, and that suffices in itself for communicating well and with fruit, that is to say, with an increase of sanctifying grace. As fire, of necessity, kindles dry wood, so Holy Communion confers, or necessarily increases, grace in every soul free from mortal sin. Whether we communicate once a year, or once a month, or even daily, if the soul is free from mortal sin, our Communion infallibly produces in us an increase of sanctifying grace.

In which souls Holy Communion produces a more considerable increase of grace.

YOU will, perhaps, say: "There are some who approach the Holy Table without any mortal sin upon their conscience, but with

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their souls soiled with venial sins, and they are not very fervent, they are even tepid in the love of God ; and there are others who approach entirely free from every deliberate venial fault, and all inflamed with the love of God. The Holy Communion increases, then, sanctifying grace in the former in the same proportion as in the latter!" Remark that we did not say that Holy Communion increases grace in the same proportion in all souls. In the better disposed, it undoubtedly pours grace in greater abundance than in souls less well disposed. Fire kindles wood, provided it is dry, but it kindles very dry wood more quickly than that which is less so. In like manner, Holy Communion increases grace in all souls free from mortal sin, but it increases it more plentifully in souls that have greater purity of conscience and a more lively love for God. The tepid soul, for instance, will acquire ten degrees of increase, where the fervent soul will obtain fifty, one hundred, etc. The Faithful are recommended, also, to approach the Holy Table with all the purity and fervor possible, not because without that purity they would be deprived of an increase of grace, but in order to receive that increase in greater abundance. Moreover, unless we would deny the efficacy of the Sacrament, we must acknowledge that the soul which communicates with a million of venial sins, receives, notwithstanding, a certain increase of sanctifying grace.

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Venial sins are not an obstacle to the increase of grace.

THIS truth, admitted by all theologians in general, is openly taught by St. Thomas of Aquin. That illustrious Doctor distinguishes in relation to Holy Communion, two sorts of venial sins, some committed before, and the others during Holy Communion itself. Of the first, he says that venial sins can in nowise prevent the effect of this Sacrament. Speaking afterward of the second, that is, of venial sins committed at the very moment of Communion, a voluntary distraction, for instance, he says that such sins hinder a part of the effect which the Sacrament is intended to produce, namely, the sweetness of the spiritual refection, but not the other part which consists in the increase of habitual grace or charity. *

St. Thomas is, undoubtedly, the first of Catholic theologians and the one possessed of greatest authority. His teachings guided the Fathers of the Council of Trent in the definitions of Faith against the heretics ; and when a doctrine is taught by him, it is for that very reason worthy of respect and veneration.

Now, let us note it well, St. Thomas clearly teaches that venial sins, even those committed in the act of communicating, cannot hinder the increase of sanctifying grace or, what amounts

* *Summa Theol.* 3 pt., quest. 78. art. 8.

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to the same thing, the increase of charity. This doctrine is sustained by Suarez, also, who is, after St. Thomas, one of the most illustrious theologians that adorn the Catholic Church. *

In what value we ought to hold the increase of Grace in the soul by Holy Communion.

SUCH is the esteem of St. Thomas for this increase of grace that he does not wish to see frequent Communion abandoned under pretext that it diminishes respect for the Blessed Sacrament.

" If, " says he, " we compare the two things, Holy Communion is still preferable to abstention, as well in relation to the effect of the Sacrament (that is, to the increase of grace) as in regard to the merit of preparation, however small we may suppose this last to be ; as also in view of the act of virtue that is made in communicating. Communion is, in effect, an act of divine charity, and charity is the principle of all merit. **

But let us return to our point of departure, and conclude that the Holy Communion received by a Christian free from every mortal sin, always confers an increase of sanctifying grace, even when the conscience of this Christian is laden with venial sins and, what is more, had he even at the moment of Communion committed a venial sin.

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* Quest. 77, art. 8, disp. 63, sect. 3.
** In 4 sentent. dist. 12, q. 3, art. 2.

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If, then, we meet masters of the spiritual life who hold a language different from St. Thomas, it is to the latter that we ought to attach ourselves. One has authority in this matter only from the fact of his being a theologian, and the better the theologian, the greater his authority. Now, as St. Thomas is the prince of theologians, he must be regarded, also, as the prince of all the masters of the spiritual life.

Demonstration of the truth, that the state of grace suffices in every case to communicate well.

We must explain more at length what we have said above, namely, *that, in general, the only disposition required to communicate worthily and with fruit is freedom from every mortal sin and, in certain cases, the simple absence from every attachment to mortal sin.* Remark well, although supremely desirable that Christians should, on approaching the Holy Table, have all possible purity of conscience and devotion, it is not less true that the Christian free from mortal sin can always communicate with fruit. Suarez, cited above, teaches that, in order to communicate worthily and with fruit, the only disposition necessary is that required by Jesus Christ, laid down by the Apostle St. Paul, and defined by the Council of Trent, namely, the state of grace. No Council, no Pope, no Father of the Church exacts more. * Féne-

* Quest. 79, art. 8, disp. 63, sect. 3.

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lon, in his letter on frequent Communion, republished by Mgr. Dupanloup, to the number of one hundred thousand copies, cites all the texts in which the Holy Fathers exhort the Faithful to communicate daily. Among these texts there will not be found a single one in which it is said to the Faithful : *Communicate every day. But remember for that, besides the state of grace, such or such a more perfect disposition is necessary.* Will not those authors who require for frequent or daily Communion high perfection and great sanctity find here matter for reflection ? Surely they would not question the right of the Fathers of the Church to be ranked first among the masters of the spiritual life.

We add that, in order to communicate worthily and with fruit, it suffices that the soul has no longer any *attachment to mortal sin.* Suppose, then, that a Christian has, unknown to himself, a mortal sin upon his conscience ; that for this mortal sin he has had imperfect sorrow called *attrition* without, however, having been absolved from it ; that, consequently, he is in good faith ; and that, in this condition, he approaches the Holy Table. We say that in such a case, Communion effaces his mortal sin and confers upon him sanctifying grace, just as sacramental absolution confers it in the confessional.

This doctrine is not ours. It is the doctrine taught by the greatest theologians, St. Thomas at their head. " If any one, " says the Angelic

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Doctor, " approaches the Holy Table with a mortal sin of which he has no knowledge, not only does he not sin, but, by virtue of the Sacrament, he obtains pardon of his sin. " * And again : "This Sacrament operates the remission of mortal sin, provided that he who communicates has no consciousness of his sin, and that he preserves no attachment to it. " **

In effect, as the rigorous Collet observes, *** it is not sin itself which is an obstacle to the infusion of grace, but the attachment to sin ; therefore, he who is in the state of mortal sin without knowing it, if he puts away all attachment, all affection to sin, is entirely justified by Holy Communion just as he would have been by sacramental absolution.

It is the same with the other Sacraments of the living, Confirmation, Extreme Unction, etc. These Sacraments, also, have the power to reconcile with God those that receive them in good faith.

We have made these observations in view especially of those that are in constant fear of communicating without previous confession, though authorized to do so by their confessor ; and that because they might, as they think, unknown to

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* In 4. Dist. 9, q. 1, art. 3.

** 3 p., q. 79, a. 3. Of course, if a person after communicating remembers a mortal sin which, forgotten before, has been indirectly remitted by Holy Communion, though never confessed, he would be obliged to tell it at his next confession, in order to submit it to the keys.

*** *De Euch.*, p. 1, c. 8.

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themselves, have a mortal sin upon their conscience, and by communicating in that state, communicate unworthily.

You know now to what you are bound in this regard. If you should happen to communicate in good faith, ignorant that you have a mortal sin upon your conscience, very far from making a sacrilegious Communion, you would obtain the pardon of that sin and regain the grace of God. The Communion that you fear to have made badly, would procure for you the inappreciable treasure of sanctifying grace, a treasure of which you will remain deprived as long as you omit Communion.

Communicate, therefore, without fear whenever your confessor authorizes you to do so. At the Table of the Lord advantages only are to be reaped. Communicate as often as you can.

Frequent Communion.

WHAT is the meaning of these words, *as often as you can?* By them we mean that, after imparting to your confessor your ardent desire to communicate frequently, you will make all the Communions that he will permit you.

All Christians cannot, as we may observe, communicate with the same frequency. Many are hindered by their occupations or by their state of dependence from going to church as often as they wish.

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The confessor examines the possibility in which his penitents are to frequent the Holy Table. He sees for each the necessity or the utility of Communion, and he prudently determines their number. Make known to your confessor, then, your lively desire to nourish yourself often with the Bread of Angels, and communicate as often as he will allow. We tell you, and we repeat it : *Make known to your confessor your earnest desire to communicate often*, for it is by that desire that many confessors are guided in permitting their penitents to communicate. Trust me in this. I have long experience.

Frequent Communion among Christians of the early ages.

THE desire that we have, O Christian soul, to see you perfectly instructed in a matter so important, urges us to make several more remarks on the subject.

The first is, that the Faithful of the early ages heard Mass every day, and that all who were not in mortal sin communicated with the celebrant. This is an historical fact, attested by tradition and the Holy Fathers. The neophytes themselves, that is, the newly baptized, communicated daily, as we learn from St. Augustine. *

Do not believe those that tell you that the

* *Serm. 277 ad. infant.*

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Christians of the first ages were all saints, and that, consequently, they were better prepared than the Christians of our day for frequent, and even daily Communion. It is very true for various reasons too numerous to cite here, that, in the first ages of the Church, there were more saints, or, if you will, more perfect souls. But, on the other hand, as ecclesiastical history proves, among the Faithful of those days were found all the vices of our own, as well as all the imperfections that we witness today. If you are tempted to doubt it, read Fénelon's Letter on *Frequent Communion*, Mgr. de Ségur's pamphlet on *Holy Communion*, and above all, Marchetti's *Critique* on Fleury. *

When you hear it said that the Christians of the early ages were, in general, saints, look upon it as a pious exaggeration. There were among them numbers of sinners who could not approach the Holy Table, on account of their not being in the grace of God ; there were, also, imperfect souls in great numbers who, notwithstanding their imperfections, communicated every day. As we have said above, the Holy Fathers, without one exception, permitted and counselled Communion to all who were not in the state of mortal sin. (See Fénelon's *Letter*.) St. Augustine goes so far as to say that, if the sins of a Christian are not grave enough to excommunicate him, he ought not to be deprived of the daily remedy of the Body of Our Lord.

* Art. I, § 7.

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The teaching of the Church upon daily Communion.

THE second point to which we desire to draw your attention, is the teaching of the Church upon Holy Communion.

The Council of Trent says that she desires to see all Christians communicate at the Masses which they hear. *

Is not this to declare openly that daily Communion is a thing supremely proper, praiseworthy, and capable of being counselled to all Christians? It was in this sense that the Sacred Congregation of Cardinals understood the text of the Council.**

The Roman Catechism, besides, makes it a duty for pastors often to exhort the Faithful to daily Communion, in order, as it says, that, as they daily give the body material nourishment, they should, also, daily procure for their soul the spiritual Bread of the Eucharist.***

Lastly, there exists a Decree of Innocent XI, promulgated in 1679, which enjoins on Bishops and pastors to allow confessors the care of determining the number of Communions for each of the Faithful, and to watch that frequent and daily Communion be not refused to any one, not even to married people or those engaged in business affairs. The Decree urges them, on the

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* Sess. 22, c. 6.
** See Barbosa, *Coll. Doct. in Conc. Trid.* h. 1.
*** *De Euch.*, n. 60.

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contrary, to favor it, and to thank the good God if the custom of frequent, and even daily, Communion exists in their diocese or in their parishes.*

After the foregoing citations, we may judge of the value to be placed on the following sentence falsely attributed to St. Augustine: *"As to daily Communion, I neither praise it nor blame it."* St. Augustine himself praised it, and desired to see it practised by all.

But setting aside St. Augustine and the other Holy Fathers, we ask whether every Christian ought not to praise unreservedly what, as we have seen, the Church praises and approves? To condemn what the Church approves, would be impiety; to refuse what she praises, would be pride. It is for this reason that the sentence, *"I neither praise nor blame Holy Communion,"* is deserving of reprobation. Every Christian ought to approve, praise, and encourage daily Communion, provided that it is approved, praised, and encouraged by the Holy Church.

The efficacy of Holy Communion.

THE Church calls the Holy Eucharist *an antidote which delivers us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal sins.*** If, in the first place, the Holy Communion

* See S. Alph. *Theol. mor.*, lib. VI, n. 256.
** Conc. Trid., sess. 13, c. 2.

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delivers us from venial sins, and effaces them from our soul, are not those masters of the spiritual life manifestly deceived who will grant frequent and daily Communion only to souls living in such purity of conscience as not to commit even venial sins? They are, without doubt, deceived; for such teaching is contrary, as we have seen, to the practice and discipline of the early ages, to the tradition of the Fathers, and again, because such directors do not understand the teaching of the Council of Trent. If one of the effects of Holy Communion is to efface venial sins, how forbid it to Christians that have venial sin upon their conscience? Evidently, that would be to prevent Holy Communion from producing one of its effects.

Consequently, when they tell you that it is desirable for the Faithful to approach the Holy Table with all possible purity, they utter praiseworthy language; but when they assert that they who have not all the purity desirable must be denied the Divine Banquet, they hold reprehensible language, which touches upon the error condemned by Alexander VIII in the twenty-third proposition, expressed in these terms: "They who have not yet for God a very pure love free from all mixture, ought to be forbidden Communion."

So then, and let us mark it well, venial sins are not a hindrance to Communion. The Holy Communion, on the contrary, is the remedy which banishes them from the soul. Those men

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of severe principles ought to read the following passage of the Roman Catechism: "This sentence of St. Augustine, *You sin every day, communicate every day*, does not belong exclusively to this great saint. If we study it well, we shall easily see that it expresses the thought of all the Fathers who have treated the subject."

Not less worthy of remark is this reflection of St. Chrysostom: "Communion is always the same whether received daily or only once a year at Paschal time." From this it follows that if we may approach the Holy Table with venial sins once or twice a year, we may do so every day.

In the second place, Communion preserves us from mortal sins. This doctrine is true provided that it is defined by the infallible authority of the Council of Trent; and again, we shall find it true if we consider it in the light of experience. It is, then, at one and the same time, a truth of dogma and a truth of fact; a truth of dogma that must be believed, and a truth of fact that we can, so to say, see with the eyes and touch with the hand. Spiritual directors agree that they who communicate often, and still more they who communicate every day, are free from mortal sin. If there are exceptions to the rule, they come from souls who approach the Holy Table through hypocrisy or interest.

Now, there are persons unworthy to communicate even at Paschal time, and it is not of such that we are speaking. We are speaking of

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souls that communicate frequently or daily through a sentiment of true devotion toward the Blessed Sacrament, and it is a fact that these souls never commit mortal sins. They fall more or less frequently into some venial faults, but into mortal sins, never. Now, living in this way, in constant favor with God, they will die in the same state and will surely be saved. In them will be verified this word of the Saviour : *"He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. He that eateth this bread shall live forever."**

After these words, I cannot forbear turning to those severe directors who wish to reserve frequent and daily Communion for perfect, or almost perfect, souls, and I say to them : "Do you know what you do by keeping imperfect souls from frequent and daily Communion?

"Do you reflect that you are depriving them of the remedy which hinders them from falling into mortal sin and maintains them in the state of grace? And yet you know what mortal sin is, and what sanctifying grace is! The first is an incomprehensible evil; the second, an inappreciable good. Now, while the Gospel and the Council of Trent tell you, and experience proves to you that Communion is the surest preservative against mortal sin, and the invincible buckler of sanctifying grace, moved by fears unknown to all the Fathers of the Church, will you deprive souls of so many Communions, which would strengthen them against mortal sin, and preserve

* St John VI, 58, 59.

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them in the state of grace? Who would hesitate to say that you give a proof of inconceivable want of reflection, and that you cause souls incalculable evil by keeping them, without any lawful motive, from the remedy that would preserve them from mortal sin, and by a legitimate induction, from the eternal death that mortal sin alone can cause?"

Perhaps you will answer: "If souls are not very perfect, and they communicate frequently, and even daily, their numerous defects will be for others a subject of scandal, above all, in religious Communities where such defects are so well known. Do we not often hear: Look at this one. See that one. She communicates so often, and she knows not how to conquer her resentment, nor refrain from criticising her neighbor. She is full of self-interest and vainglory, etc. Besides, not having the fervor required for frequent and daily Communion, such persons fall into the habit of communicating by routine. They lose respect, they fail in reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament."

Is it, indeed, true, I reply, that souls still imperfect scandalize the neighbor by their numerous Communions? It is you, it seems to me, who scandalize the Faithful by teaching that frequent and daily Communion exacts great sanctity.

By doing so, do you not imply that they who communicate without the perfection that you exact, are doing wrong and abusing the Sacra-

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ment? Cease teaching such doctrine. Rather teach with the Fathers of the Church and the Council of Trent, that Communion is prohibited only to those that are guilty of mortal sin ; that Communion does not suppose exemption from venial sin ; but that, on the contrary, it washes away such faults wherever it finds them. Say that, and there will no longer be any question of scandal.

If we should begin to teach that it is forbidden to eat meat not only on Friday and Saturday, but even on Wednesday, they who would believe our words, could not see Christians eating meat on Wednesday without being scandalized. But it is clear that the scandal would arise from our erroneous teaching.

And of what scandal are you speaking? As for us, we see scandal only where by our fault we give to the neighbor an occasion to sin. Now, how can the imperfect who communicate often, offer occasion of sin to those that see them kneeling at the Holy Table? If this were so, how can priests, having not all (the people know it well) arrived at perfection, nevertheless, daily celebrate Holy Mass?

This observation refutes not less peremptorily that other argument drawn from the want of respect and devotion that frequent Communion might produce in the imperfect. Were this want of respect a sufficient motive to refuse frequent Communion to seculars, it would with stronger

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reason prohibit priests from daily celebrating Holy Mass.

Our Lord willed to remain with us in the Blessed Sacrament, not to win our respect, but to gain our love. It is very true that the Blessed Sacrament has a right to our most profound respect. Who would dare maintain the contrary? Nevertheless, if our Divine Lord had in view by remaining among us, to win our respect, He would not have hidden Himself under the appearance of a morsel of bread. He would not have abandoned Himself into the hands of men, He would not have willed to reside in so many churches poor and destitute, forced to remain alone night and day.

His aim, then, was to gain our love. Now, love cannot support the absence of the loved one, for of its very nature it tends to union. A friend never says to his friend: "Remain at a distance. Let us love from afar." On the contrary, he invites his friend to draw near, and he is delighted to pass entire days with him.

It is precisely because Jesus Christ had in view to win our love that He willed to conceal Himself under the appearance of a little bread, to abandon Himself into the hands of men, and to remain in the poorest and most miserable churches. There is no doubt that, in instituting the Holy Eucharist, He preferred love to respect.

We have already observed that, even if the frequency of our Communions should produce

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in us some diminution of the respect due to the Sacrament of the Altar, we ought not, according to St. Thomas, make such account of that diminution if we compare it with the increase of grace which Holy Communion operates in the soul.

Again, it must be observed that this want of reverence is less a defect of substantial devotion than of sensible devotion, and the latter is not necessary in order to communicate holily.

We must distinguish between respect for holy things and the feeling of that respect. The latter certainly diminishes with custom. We priests know that better than others. The first time that we celebrated Mass and during the early days of our priesthood, we felt for the Holy Sacrifice a sentiment of veneration far above that which we now experience after so many years of daily celebration. But is that any reason to think that we have now less respect than formerly? That the habit of celebrating Mass has diminished our respect, is evident; but we must not therefore conclude that we substantially fail in respect for that holy and awe-inspiring action. What is true for us priests is equally true for the laity who communicate frequently. Now, no priest would for that reason give up the daily celebration of the Holy Mass; nor ought we for a similar reason prohibit frequent, and even daily, Communion to the laity.

But it will, perhaps, be said: Do you wish all Christians in the state of grace to com-

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municate daily? No. That is not the conclusion which we draw from the preceding premises. Our design is to enlighten souls on a matter so important, and to convince them that there exists much ignorance and prejudice relative to frequent and daily Communion.

The following is our conclusion : Let each one in what regards the frequentation of the Holy Table, submit to the judgment of his confessor or spiritual director, who is authorized, conformably to the Decree of Innocent XI., to prescribe or permit the number of Communions as he may judge useful and proper. As for you, dear readers, endeavor to live in great purity of conscience. That is the most beautiful, not to say the only disposition that can be desired in him who approaches the Table of the Lord. Testify to your director a lively desire to communicate as often as possible, and the Lord will give him the light necessary to grant what will be best for you. Be very careful afterward not to omit any of the Communions that he has permitted you. As far as we are concerned, we hope that you may communicate even daily.

On the other hand, we know the world, and we also know that many in it cannot communicate as often as they desire. Wives depend upon their husbands, daughters on their mothers, servants on their employers. How many among these would wish to approach the Sacraments frequently, and cannot do it? Let them submit to the disposition of Providence, and commu-

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nicate whenever they can. God will be satisfied. And supposing that they communicate rarely, because they are unable to do so more frequently, God will supply by other means, by other graces for the Communions of which they are forcibly deprived.

One thing that must not be lost sight of in reference to the frequentation of the Sacraments, is that by rights a wife is independent of her husband, a daughter of her mother, a servant of his master; consequently, if you can frequent the Sacraments unknown to your superiors, husband, mother, or master, you need have no scruple to do so. Some women whose husbands are inimical to religion, daughters whose mothers dread to see them become devotees, as they say, arrange matters so that they can go out in the morning under pretext of making a purchase or a visit, of taking the air, or simply of hearing Mass, etc., and they profit by such occasions to approach the Sacraments. Such expedients are praiseworthy and permissible. They may be imitated.

For those that cannot make use of such pretexts, it is very necessary that they should be resigned. Nevertheless, they ought not always to yield entirely, nor too easily, to the position in which they are placed. They ought to express to husband or mother their just demands, and try to gain their permission to frequent the Sacraments as often as their confessor counsels them. He, on his side, should exercise in such

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cases the requisite prudence. Servants can more easily elude the claims of their employers. By rising early, they can, generally speaking, frequent the Sacraments without being observed. If this means fails, if they are forced to approach but very rarely those sources of salvation and eternal life, they ought to choose another home. Employers are free to discharge their servants, and servants, also, are free to quit their employers. When the welfare of their soul exacts such a course, they would be more stupid than resigned not to do so. Employers would not retain servants to the detriment of their own temporal interests, neither should servants remain where their spiritual interests, which are far more precious and important, are imperilled. To do so, would be stupidity rather than resignation.

Would that we had a voice to be heard at the ends of the earth! We would cry aloud: O Christian souls, consider attentively what happiness, what a favor to be able to approach the Holy Table! What happiness, what a favor to be able to unite yourselves intimately to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to nourish yourselves with His adorable Flesh, to quench your thirst with His Divine Blood, and thus to receive into your souls the Fountain of all graces, of all benedictions, and of all celestial favors! Come all, O Christian souls, come, taste this Bread from heaven, this Manna of the angels, this Marrow of Divine Goodness! It is the Fruit of the true

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Tree of life. Eat It with holy avidity. It will preserve in you the life of grace during your pilgrimage here below, and It will give you the life of glory in a blessed eternity.

Can you eat It but once a month? Humble yourself and say: I am not worthy to eat It oftener. Never omit monthly Communion.

Can you eat It only every fifteen, or every eight days? Be satisfied with what is allowed you, but never fail to communicate on the days upon which that favor is granted you.

Can you nourish yourself with It, satiate your soul with It more frequently, even every day? Ah, you are a happy creature, blessed among all creatures! When ought you to abstain from Holy Communion? On Good Friday! *

* Pontifical Decrees.

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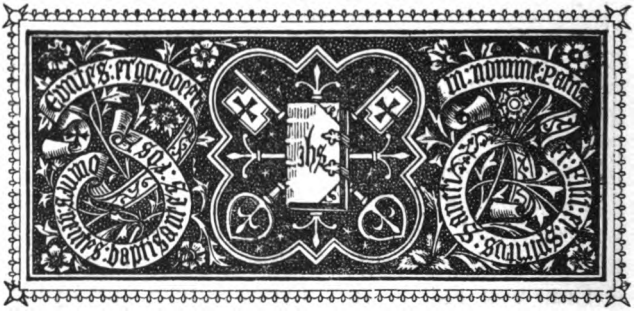

Pontifical Decrees.

I.

Decree on Receiving Daily the Most Holy Eucharist.

THE Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace which are offered to the Faithful who receive the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration: "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the Faithful who are present should communicate not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally by the actual reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. 22, cap. 6). These words declare plainly enough the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this Heavenly Banquet, and should derive therefrom abundant fruit for their sanctification.

This wish of the Council is in entire agreement

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with that desire wherewith Christ Our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this divine Sacrament. For He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the necessity of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, especially in these words: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John vi, 59). Now, from this comparison of the food of angels with bread and with the manna, it was easily to be understood by His disciples that, as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Hebrews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul might daily partake of this Heavenly Bread and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, whereas, in the Lord's Prayer, we are bidden to ask for "our daily bread," the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body, as the Eucharistic Bread which ought to be our daily food.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the Faithful should daily approach the Sacred Banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the Faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty

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is liable ; so that its primary purpose is not that the honor and reverence due to Our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (St. Augustine, *Serm. 57 in Matth., de Orat. Dom.*, n. 7). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults, and preserved from deadly sins." (Sess. 13, cap. 2).

This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians, that they daily flocked to the Holy Table as to a source of life and strength. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread" (Acts ii, 42). And that this practice was to continue into later ages, not without great fruit of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

But when in later times piety grew cold, and more especially, under the influence of the plague of Jansenism, disputes began to arise concerning the dispositions with which it was proper to receive Communion frequently or daily, and writers vied with one another in imposing more and more stringent conditions as necessary to be fulfilled. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to communicate daily, and to derive from this most healing Sacrament Its more abundant fruits ; the rest being content to partake of It once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay,

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to such a pitch was rigorism carried, that whole classes of persons were excluded from a frequent approach to the Holy Table; for instance, those engaged in trade, or even *those living in the state of matrimony*.

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was a divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without the reception of the Sacrament, besides other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, they held that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact administered It, even on Good Friday.

Under these circumstances the Holy See did not fail in its duty of vigilance. For, by a Decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures*, issued on February 12th, A.M. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent VI, it condemned these errors, and put a stop to such abuses; at the same time declaring that all the Faithful of whatsoever class, merchants or tradesmen or married persons not excepted, might be admitted to frequent Communion, according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on the 7th December, 1690, by a Decree of Pope Alexander VIII, *Sanctissimus Dominus*, the proposition of Baius, postulating a perfectly pure love of God, without any admixture of defect, as requisite on the part of those who wished to approach the Holy Table, was condemned.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the

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pretext of showing due honor and reverence to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds even of good men, did not entirely disappear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the declarations of the Holy See ; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the Faithful only in rare cases, and under many conditions.

On the other hand, there were not wanting men of learning and piety who more readily granted permission for this practice, so salutary and so pleasing to God. In accordance with the teachings of the Fathers, they maintained that there was no precept of the Church which prescribed more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion, while the good effects of daily Communion would, they alleged, be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

In our own day the controversy has been carried on with increased warmth, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of confessors and the consciences of the Faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. According, certain distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls, have urgently besought His Holiness, Pope Pius X, to deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the questions concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion ; so that this usage, so

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salutary and so pleasing to God, might not only suffer no decrease among the Faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated: a thing most desirable in these days, when religion and the Catholic Faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous, out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the Faithful should be invited to partake of the Sacred Banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit to the utmost by Its fruits, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation, to be looked into and decided once for all *(definiendum)*.

Accordingly, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a Plenary Session held on December 16th, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny; and, after sedulously examining the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows:

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord, and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the Faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect,

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but for the purpose of pleasing God, or being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is more expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning mortally in future ; and, if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves from even venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better ; therefore, care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation and followed by a suitable thanksgiving according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade any one *(ne quemquam avertant)* from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

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6. But since it is plain that, by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers — in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (Part ii, cap. 4, n. 63) — are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the Faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted especially in Religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds; with regard to which, however, the Decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on December 17th, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical Seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar ; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars, Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive*, and not *preceptive*. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the

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Eucharistic Table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this Decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this Decree, the Superior of each house is to see that it is read in community in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this Decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness, Pope Pius X, by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, in an audience held on December 17th, 1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present Decree and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local ordinaries and regular prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes, they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

+ VINCENT,

Card. Bishop of Praenestina, Prefect.

CAJETAN DE LAI, *Secretary.*

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II.

Decree on the Confession of Daily Communicants.

His Holiness, Pope Pius X, most earnestly desires that the praiseworthy custom, so very acceptable to God, by which the Faithful, in a state of grace and with a right intention, daily approach Holy Communion, may become more general and may lead to more virtuous lives. For which reason, graciously and gladly receiving the petitions of many persons addressed to him through the Most Eminent Cardinal Casimir Gennari, he has justly determined to grant a special favor to all those who follow or desire to follow the aforesaid practice.

Pope Clement XIII, of happy memory, by a Decree of this Sacred Congregation of the 9th day of December, 1763, granted to all the Faithful, "who, striving to purify their souls by frequent confession of their sins, were accustomed, unless they were legitimately hindered, to approach the Sacrament of Penance at least once a week, and were not conscious of having committed any mortal sin since their last confession, the privilege of gaining all Indulgences whatsoever, without the actual confession which otherwise would be necessary for gaining them; this concession, however, being in no wise applicable to the Indulgence of a Jubilee, whether ordinary or extraordinary, or to other Indul-

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gences granted in like manner; for which, besides the other works enjoined, sacramental confession must be made within the time prescribed." Now, however, to all the Faithful who, being in a state of grace and having a right and devout intention, are accustomed daily to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, even if they once or twice in a week omit their daily Communion, our Most Holy Father Pius X grants that they may avail themselves of the above-mentioned Indult of Clement XIII, of happy memory, without the weekly confession, which in other circumstances is still of obligation for rightly gaining the Indulgences that occur during the week. His Holiness, moreover, has graciously declared that this privilege will hold good in future times. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome the 14th day of February, 1906.

A. Card. Tripepi, *Prefect.*
D. Panici, Archbishop of Laodicea, *Secretary.*

The present Rescript has been shown at the Secretariate of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics. In testimony whereof, etc.

Joseph M. Canon Coselli, *Substitute.*

Given at Rome, at the aforesaid Secretariate, the 16th day of February, 1906.

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III.

Holy Communion in the Case of Children Who Have Just Received It for the First Time, and in That of Sick People Afflicted with Some Chronic Disease and Unable to Keep the Eucharistic Fast.

On the 20th day of December, 1905, His Holiness, our most Holy Father, Pope Pius X, after consulting with this S. C., published a Decree "concerning the daily reception of the Most Holy Eucharist," in which "all the Faithful of whatever rank or condition" are most urgently exhorted "to frequent and daily Communion, as most conformable to the wishes of Christ Our Lord and of the Catholic Church, so that no one can licitly be excluded from it who is in the state of grace and approaches the Holy Table with a truly pious intention."

Besides, in the same document, n. 7, it is decreed: "that frequent and daily Communion should be encouraged, especially in religious institutions of whatever kind. . . . above all in ecclesiastical Seminaries, where the students aspire to the service of the Altar, and likewise in all other institutions for the education of Christian youths *(christianis ephebeis)*.

Nay, more, in order to propagate everywhere and more and more effectively the custom of daily Communion so desirable and most pleasing to God, and in order that it may yield more abundant fruits, His Holiness, on the 30th day

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of May, 1905, not only granted Indulgences to all the Faithful who devoutly recite a certain prayer for the propagation of the pious custom of daily Communion, but also in a Decree "Urbis et Orbis," of the 14th day of February, 1906, published by the Sacr. Cong. of Indulg. and Holy Relics, kindly conceded that all Indulgences could be gained by daily Communion, without the condition of weekly confession.

Numberless letters addressed to the Holy See by Bishops and Superiors of Religious Orders, as well as many articles in periodicals commenting upon the Decree of the 20th of December, 1905, show with what reverential submission the dispositions and declarations of the Holy See in this matter were received by all, and with what joy they were welcomed by very many.

But at the same time doubts and petitions were addressed to the S. C., among which two especially deserve a particular attention. They concern : the one, children who have just received their first Holy Communion ; the other, those who are ill of a lingering disease and desire to be strengthened by the Eucharistic Bread repeatedly, but are not able to keep in its fulness the natural fast.

Hence, the Most Holy Father was requested to deign to solve the two following doubts :

Doubt I. *Should all the students of Catholic Schools, even those children who have just*

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received their first Holy Communion, be encouraged to approach the Holy Table every day ?

DOUBT II. *May not the sick afflicted with a tedious disease, and who cannot strictly keep the Eucharistic fast, be granted some privilege so as not to be deprived for so long a period of the Eucharistic Bread?*

His Holiness, having entrusted the Sacred Congregation of the Council with the examination of this matter, the latter, all things being carefully considered, on the 15th day of December, 1906, resolved and decreed :

TO THE FIRST DOUBT. *That the frequent reception of Holy Communion is recommended according to the first Decree* (On Daily Receiving the Most Holy Eucharist, 20th of Dec., 1905) *even to children who have been once admitted to the Holy Table conformably to the directions contained in the Roman Catechism, ch. 4, n. 63 ; that they must not be prevented from receiving frequently, but, on the contrary, must be exhorted to do so, the contrary practice obtaining in some places being hereby condemned.*

TO THE SECOND DOUBT. *Conformably to the mind* (of the petitioner) *after consulting with the Most Holy Father.*

The exact import of the Holy Father's concession is officially declared, as follows :

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Decree on Holy Communion for the Sick or for Invalids Who Are Not Fasting.

IT is scarcely necessary to mention the great joy with which Bishops and Superiors of Religious Orders especially received the publication of the Decree of December 20th, 1905, concerning the frequent and daily reception of the Holy Eucharist and the Indulgences granted by our Holy Father, Pius X on the 30th of May of the same year, to all the Faithful who shall recite devoutly special prayers for the propagation of daily Communion ; and the supplemental Decree *urbis et orbis* on the 14th of February, 1906, by the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics, by virtue of which the Faithful can gain all the Indulgences for daily Communion without the burden of weekly confession. With a view to encourage the pious desires thereby enkindled, the question arose as to whether it would not be possible in some way to satisfy the longing for the comfort to be derived from the frequent reception of Holy Communion on the part of invalids suffering from a protracted illness, even though they were not able to observe the prescribed natural fast in its entirety. Whereupon, with this in view, humble petitions were laid before our Holy Father, Pius X, who, after mature deliberation, and upon the advice of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, has kindly permitted invalids who have already been ill for a month, and whose speedy con-

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valescence is doubtful, to receive the Blessed Sacrament *once* or *twice weekly*, upon the advice of their confessors, where it is question of invalids who live in religious houses in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or who enjoy the privilege of having Mass celebrated in their domestic oratory; *once* or *twice* monthly for others, even though they should have previously taken liquid refreshment, the rules prescribed by the Roman Ritual and by the Sacred Congregation in this matter being otherwise observed.

The present instructions are to be valid notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given at Rome on the 7th of December, 1906.

VINCENT CARDINAL BISHOP PRAENESTE, *Prefect.*

+ C. DE LAI, *Secretary.*

"The words *per modum potus* (in the form of a drink) are to be understood as meaning that one may take soup, coffee, and other liquid foods with which some substance has been mixed, such as *semolina*, or grated bread, provided that the mixture does not lose the nature of liquid food." (S. Cong. Council, Dec. 7th, 1906.)

Practical Conclusions from the First Point.

1. The only dispositions absolutely necessary to receive Holy Communion frequently, even every day, are the state of grace and a right intention.

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2. Now these dispositions are usually found especially in children who have just received their first Holy Communion, whose understanding wickedness has not altered, and whose soul has not been beguiled by deceit.

3. Wherefore frequent and daily Communion is to be recommended especially to children, for it is desirable that they should be imbued with the grace of Our Lord before passions have perverted them, and that they should be thus strengthened in innocence and piety.

4. This most salutary practice should be most especially fostered in Seminaries, monasteries of both sexes, and other pious Institutions in which even very young children are instructed and educated.

Practical Conclusions from the Second Point.

1. Holy Communion may be given to those who are afflicted with a disease not mortal, but which is chronic, and to patients whose convalescence is long, although they cannot strictly keep the Eucharistic fast.

2. The food that can be administered to them, whatever be its nature, must be in liquid form.

3. In such cases, when the illness has lasted for a month, and there is no appearance of prompt recovery, the patients may, upon the confessor's advice, receive the Holy Eucharist *once or twice a week*, if they live in religious houses

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where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved or if they enjoy the privilege of a private oratory ; in other cases, they will be entitled to Holy Communion only *once or twice a month.*

From the ACTA S. SEDIS, Oct., 1906, and the *Emmanuel*, Jan., 1907.

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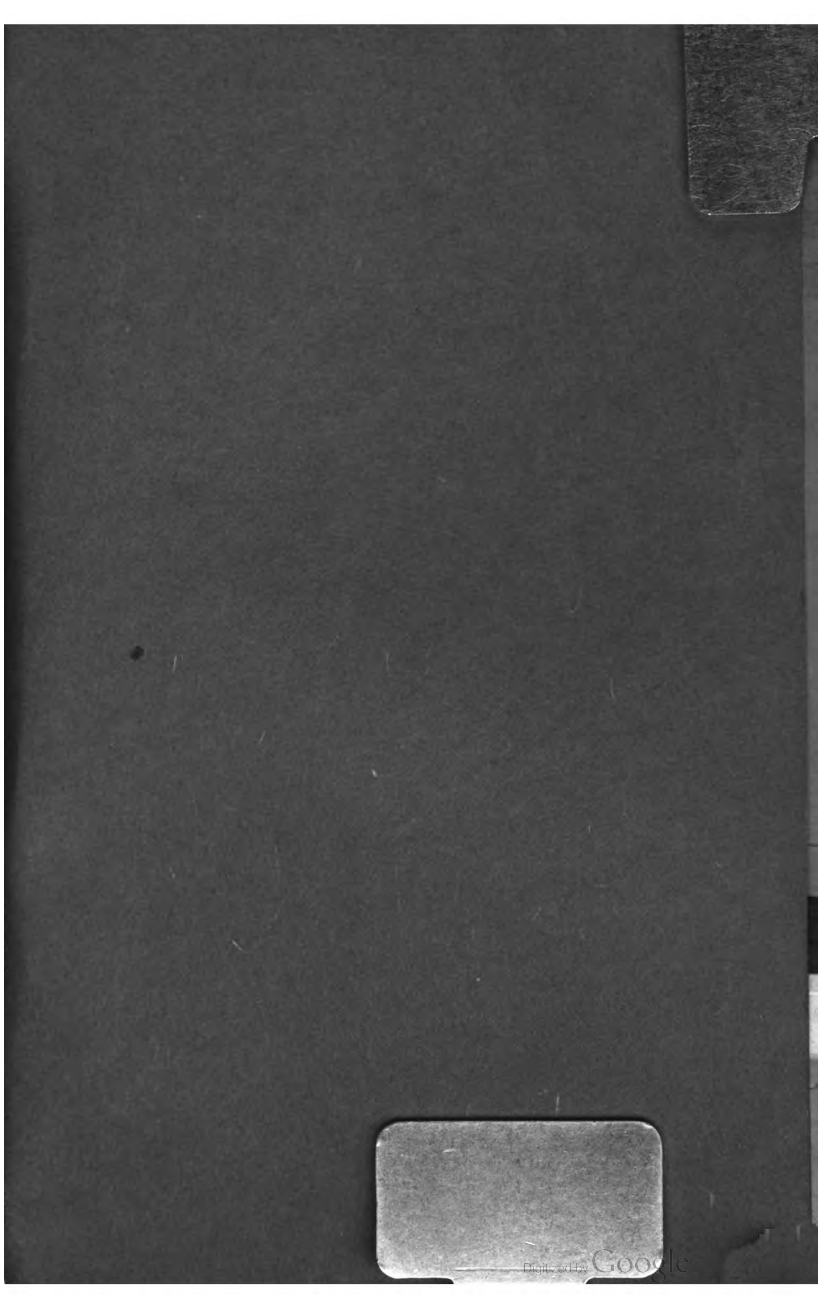
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THE SENTINEL
of the Blessed Sacrament

is an illustrated magazine published monthly by The Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is well gotten-up, interesting and attractive from cover to cover.

It is written in a simple and charming style.

Every month it contains stories for young and old; notes and comments on the topics of the day; serious articles on important subjects; a special page for the children; one for the members of the People's Eucharistic League; a help for the monthly Hour of Adoration; gleanings from the lives of Lovers of the Blessed Sacrament; practical suggestions for the season's devotions; a question-box; Editor's Notes, etc.

The frontispiece and the other illustrations relieve the eye by their beauty and by their clear reproduction.

The price is reasonable, two dollars yearly in the United States.

And all this in order to draw hearts closer to Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, to awaken and encourage devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to enkindle in the souls of our Catholic people a great fire of love for Jesus in the Sacrament of Love.

This is the ambition of THE SENTINEL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. This is the great devotion of the present day. Will you help in this great movement? Begin today.

Spread the SENTINEL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT all around you. Put it into every Catholic home. Our Lord will do the rest.

A sample copy will be mailed on request.

THE SENTINEL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
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